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Turkish Racism Against Kurds: Colonial Violence, Racist Slurs and Mob Attacks

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Executive summary

Throughout the 20th century, the modern Turkish state has dealt with ethnically, socially, historically, and religiously defined groups living in the remaining Ottoman territory with different forms of integration and authoritarianism. It built a racialized social regime based on Turkish supremacy, and the state has ruled northern Kurdistan as a colony. This article focuses on Turkish racist slurs and racist mob attacks targeting Kurds in Turkish cities and analyzes them in relation to Turkish colonial domination in northern Kurdistan. It argues that the Turkish army has an important place in making the racialized social regime and producing and disseminating the racialized ideas, slurs and practices targeting Kurds. The article also identifies the year 2005 as a milestone in the history of Turkish-Kurdish relations and Turkish racism. In that year, following the flag-provocation event in Mersin, which was carried out by the Turkish deep-state forces, 'respect the flag' demonstrations were organized throughout Turkey. These demonstrations mobilized thousands of Turks around anti-Kurdish sentiments,

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and since then, the number of racist mob attacks against Kurds in Turkey has increased significantly.

Racism

The classification of people as 'negro', 'Indian' or 'white' and modern racial division of labor among people according to this classification dates back to the 16th century. Since then, racism has been institutionalized and has become a global-level modern social regime. Like patriarchy and capitalism, modern racism has become an essential component of the modern-world system.[2] Throughout the classical colonial period, European colonialists constructed and represented the indigenous people in their colonies as uncivilized, animalistic, barbaric, dirty, less human, and stupid creatures. The existing literature on racism agrees that modern racism emerged to legitimize and perpetuate the conquest and exploitation of colonized people by the European colonizers and serve the needs of Eurocentric capitalist modes of production and different forms of labor domination.[3] White supremacist European colonial imaginary dehumanized and portrayed colonial subjects as biologically and culturally inferior.[4] Modern colonialism oversimplified the culture of the conquered natives and negated their national existence by expropriation, enslavement, and abolishing natives' customs.[5]

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[2] Quijano, A. and Wallerstein, I. (1992) 'Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System', *International Social Science Journal*, 134, pp. 550-551.

[3] See among others: Bonacich, E (1972) 'A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market', *American Sociological Review*, 37 (5), pp. 547—59; Cox, O. C. (2000), 'Race Relations: Its Meaning, Beginning, and Progress', in L. Back and J. Solomos (eds.) *The Theories of Race and Racism* (London: Routledge); Hall, S. (1980) 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance', in *UNESCO Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris: UNESCO); Wolpe, H., (1986) 'Class Concepts, Class Struggle, and Racism', in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds.) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press); Rex, J. (1986) 'The Role of Class Analysis in the Study of Race Relations – Weberian Perspective', in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds.) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press).

[4] Miles, R. and Brown, M. (1986) *Racism*. London: Routledge; Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997) 'Rethinking Racism toward a Structural Interpretation', *American Sociological Review* 62 (3), pp. 465—80; Solomos, J. (2003) *Theorizing Race and Racism in Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Grosfoguel, R. (1999) 'Introduction: 'Cultural Racism' and Colonial Caribbean Migrants in Core Zones of the Capitalist World-Economy', *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center) 22 (4), pp. 409—34.

[5] Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of The Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld; Fanon, F. (1959) *Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom,* Retrieved from: http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/national-culture.htm

In this commentary, my analysis of anti-Kurd Turkish racism draws on the literature that explains racism in connection with the historical processes of colonization - enslavement, conquest, indentured servitude, peonage, and colonial or neocolonial labor immigration.[6] We can divide the existing literature on racism in Turkey into two groups based on the periods they focus. Scholars in the first group focus on the early republican period, which covers the 1920s to the 1940s, and they attempt to answer the different aspects of the following two questions: 'How do the Turkish state, Turkish institutions, state officials, anthropologists, academics, writers and journal circles identify the biologically defined 'race'? How were Turks constructed as a superior biological race in Turkey?'[7] Scholars in the second group focus on the period from the 1990s to the present and evaluate racist discourses and ideologies that humiliate, marginalize, dehumanize and exclude non-Sunni Muslims and non-Turks by constructing Turkishness as a superior identity in the media, in everyday life or institutions.[8]

Scholars of the existing literature on racism in Turkey relate racism with Turkish nationalism but do not associate Turkish racism with

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[6] Cox, O. C. (2000) 'Race Relations: Its Meaning, Beginning, and Progress', in L. Back and J. Solomos (eds.) *The Theories of Race and Racism*, London: Routledge; Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge; Jordan, W. D. (1986) 'First Impressions', in L. Beck and J. Solomos (eds.) *The Theories of Race and Racism*, London and New York: Routledge; Bonilla-Silva, *op.cit.*, p.471; Wallerstein, I. (1991) 'The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism', in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. New York: Verso; Quijano and Wallerstein, *op.cit.*, pp. 550-551.

[7] Yıldız, A. (2010) '*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene' Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938),* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları; Gökay, B. and Whitman, D. (2017) "No Racism Here': Modern Turkey and the Question of Race and National Identity', *Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal***;** Arslan, E. (2003) 'Türkiye'de Irkçılık', in T. Bora and M. Gültekingil (eds.) *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Milliyetçilik, Cilt 4*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları; Göksu Özdoğan, G. (2001) *Turan'dan Bozkurt'a Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946)* (İstanbul:İletişim Yayınları); Xypolia, I. (2016) 'Racist Aspect of Modern Turkish Nationalism, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies,* 12(2), pp.111-124; Maksudyan, N. (2005) *Türklüğü Ölçmek Bilim Kurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları; Cagaptay, S. (2004) 'Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40(3), 86–101; Ergin, M. (2008) '"Is the Turk a White Man?" Towards a Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44(6), pp. 827-850.

[8] Gökay and Whitman, op. cit.; Ergin, M. (2014) 'The racialization of Kurdish Identity in Turkey', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37(2), pp.322–342; Gönen, Z. (2011) Neoliberal Politics of Crime: The İzmir Public Order Police and Criminalization of the Urban Poor in Turkey since the Late 1990s. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Binghamton University; Çoban Keneş, H. (2015) Yeni Irkçılığın 'Kirli' Ötekileri Kürtler, Aleviler, Ermeniler. İstanbul: Dipnot Yayınları; Yelda, Çoğunluk Aydınlarında Irkçılık, Belge Yayınları, İstanbul:1998.

Turkish colonialism. However, it is highly necessary to link Turkish racism to Turkish colonialism because the geography which was named 'Turkey' at the beginning of the 20th century has been Turkified through destruction, occupation and the elimination of the self-governments of indigenous ethnic groups (e.g. Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians) since the 11th century, and from the 19th century onward, the Turkish domination of the indigenous people took a modern colonial form.[9] Not associating Turkish racism with Turkish colonialism is contrary to the historical trajectory of literature on racism developed in the USA and Europe and to the general agreement about the sources of racism in the existing literature that I briefly summarized above. In this commentary, I propose approaching the Turkish-supremacist sovereignty established by Sunni Muslim Turks on autochthonous/indigenous people living in modern Turkey as a colonial relationship. I will begin by highlighting the connections between Turkish colonialism and Turkish racism against Kurds. Then I will discuss the racist slurs against Kurds in Turkish culture and the racist mob attacks against Kurds in Turkish cities, which increased in the post-1990 period.

Turkish Racism

We live in a Turkish-Sunni supremacist racialized regime in Turkey. The modern Turkish state has been constructed as a racist state and has produced racist projects by providing privileged and superior political, economic, and social status to Turks, especially Sunni Turks. Christians and Jews have been completely excluded from the Turkish supremacist racialized regime and are insulted and dehumanized. Almost 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives during the Armenian Genocide in 1915, and thousands of Greeks and Assyrians also lost their lives in the same period. The Turkish state

[9] Klein, J. (2011) The Margins of Empire Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone. Standford: Stanford University Press; Powell, E. T. (2003) A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan. Berkeley: The University of California Press; Eldem, E. (2000) 'Istanbul: İmparatorluk Payitahtından Periferileşmiş Bir Başkente', in E. Eldem, D. Goffman and B. Masters (eds) Doğu İle Batı Arasında Osmanlı Kenti Halep, İzmir, İstanbul, Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları; Deringil, S. (2003). "They live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate', Society for Comparative Study of Society and History 45(2), pp. 311-342.

has not recognized the genocide or compensated the Christian/Armenian community, and it is yet to issue an official apology to the remaining Christian people of this region. Thus, the Turkish supremacist racialized regime has been constructed as a denial regime.[10] After the foundation of the Turkish republic in 1923, the modern Turkish state has dealt with each ethnically, socially, historically, and religiously defined group living in the remaining Ottoman territory with different forms of integration and authoritarianism. In the 1920s and the 1930s, the state defined Turkishness as a universal nation and race, and it has rendered Sunni Turks the dominant nationalized group with a superior and privileged status. Sunni Turks have constantly benefited from the state's cultural, economic and political resources. On the other hand, the state has constantly undermined the cultural, economic, and political power of the remaining non-Muslim and non-Turkish groups.

While constructing a modern racialized regime, the Turkish state also constructed a modern colonial regime in northern Kurdistan (western Armenia) through occupation, brutality, assimilation and denial policies.[11] In comparison to many colonial examples in the world, Turkish colonialism in northern Kurdistan has been realized through the state's public discourse of denial and the state's secret discourse of colonialism found in the confidential state reports. The Turkish state has never publicly and constitutionally identified northern Kurdistan as its colony. On the contrary, it publicly and constitutionally denied the existence of Kurds, the Kurdish language and Kurdistan. In the 1990s, some historians and archivers[12] discovered secret state reports among the personal archives and papers of the dead state officials. These secret reports demonstrate

[10] Yarkın, G. (2021) 'Irksallaştırılmış Toplumsal Rejim Sömürgesellik ve Kürtler', *Cogito,* 101.
[11] Duruiz, D. (2020) 'Tracing the conceptual genealogy of Kurdistan as international colony', *Middle East Report*; Yarkın, G. (2019) 'İnkâr Edilen Hakikat: Sömürge Kuzey Kürdistan', *Kürd Araştırmaları*, Sayı 1.
[12] Bayrak, M. (1994) Kürdoloji Belgeleri. Ankara: Özge Yayınları; Bayrak, M. (2013) Kürtlere Vurulan Kelepçe Şark Islahat Planı. Özge Yayınları; Bayrak, M. (2013) Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri Gizli Belgeler-Araştırmalar- Notlar. Özge Yayınları; Yayman, H. (2016) Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap.

that the top Turkish state officials used the term colony (*müstemleke*) to describe 'the East' (northern Kurdistan). In fact, regardless of the existence of these reports, the state openly implemented colonial law and colonial violence in this region. The state committed many massacres against Kurds, and the Alevi-Kurds of Dersim experienced a genocide in 1937-38.

The Turkish state constructed a modern colonial regime in northern Kurdistan through colonial governors called *umumi müffettiş* or *kayyım*, everyday military and police violence, forced assimilation in schools, mass incarceration, elimination of Kurdish self-determination and the suppression of Kurdish insurgencies. The state expected Kurds to construct themselves as 'good' loyal Turkish citizens willing to accept assimilation into Turkishness voluntarily and respect Turkish sovereignty, supremacy, and the Turkish nation. A dichotomy has been created between 'loyal easterner citizens' (in other words, 'good Kurds') and traitors (in other words, 'bad Kurds'). Thus, the Turkish state constructed Kurds as 'usual suspects' who constantly needed to show their loyalty to the Turkish state and the Turkish nation.[13]

Racist Turkish Slurs against Kurds

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Turkish army committed massacres, executions, widespread torture and other major human rights violations against Kurds in northern Kurdistan. While committing these crimes, the army officials produced, circulated and popularized numerous anti-Kurdish racist slurs and stereotypes. The army has played a key role in making racialized ideas and practices targeting Kurds. For instance, during the Alevi-Kurdish Genocide in Dersim and the other massacres against Sunni Kurds in the 1920s and the 1930s, the Turkish army officials portrayed and identified the Kurdish victims by using essentializing racialized terms such as 'feudal lord', 'savage', 'backward', 'bandit', 'brigand' or 'ignorant'.[14] During the 1990s, Turkish paramilitary forces identified the dead

[13] Yarkın, G. (2019) 'İnkâr Edilen Hakikat: Sömürge Kuzey Kürdistan', *Kürd Araştırmaları*, Sayı 1.
[14] Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları 1. Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2011.

bodies of the Kurdish guerrillas as 'carrion'. The Turkish army and paramilitary forces have worked as the main producers of the racist Turkish imaginary.

Frantz Fanon states that colonizers use zoological terms to dehumanize the natives they dominate to legitimize their tyranny and brutality.[15] After the Dersim Genocide in 1938, as in the violent practices of the soldiers of European armies in the colonies, Turkish soldiers forcefully kidnapped the surviving girls of Dersim and brought some of them to Elazığ Girls' Institute to be assimilated into Turkish culture. When these youths arrived in these schools, racist Turkish soldiers humiliated them using racist slurs, such as 'mountain bears' and 'Kurds with tails'. Soldiers and school administrators scraped off these girls' hair and removed their traditional clothes. These girls were treated as war captives and were employed as servants by the school administration for cleaning and other menial work.[16]

Various racist stereotypes, idioms, proverbs and slurs pertaining to Kurds in Turkish can be found in many different examples of the Turkish literature since the Ottoman period. These include: 'Kurds with tails' (Kuyruklu Kürtler), 'Savage Kurd' (Yabani Kürt), 'Hairy Kurd', (Kıllı Kürt), 'You cannot make a fur from a bear, a friend from a Kurd' (*Ayıdan post Kürtten dost olamaz*), 'The God of a Kurd and a dog is the same' (*Kürt ile itin Allahı birdir*), 'The called a donkey Kurdish, it did not eat food for forty years' (*Eşeğe Kürt demişler eşek kırk yıl yem yememiş),* 'A donkey does not have a taste for compote, a Kurd does not understand a word' (*Eşek hoşaftan Kürt laftan anlamaz*), 'There is not a smart person among Kurds' (*Kürt kısmında akıllı olmaz*), 'Do not give one to Kurds they ask for two and ask for a bed' (*Kürde bir verme iki ister, yatmaya da yer ister*).[17]

Among the Turkish racist slurs and stereotypes against Kurds, 'Kurd/s with tail/s' has been very popular both in the Turkish army

[15] Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of The Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, p.41.
[16] Türkyılmaz, Z. (2015) 'Dersim'den Tunceli'ye Bir Kolonizasyon Projesi Sıdıka Avar ve Dağ Çiçeklerim', *Kürt Tarihi* (21).
[17] Alakom, R. (2010) *Türk Edebiyatında Kürtler*. İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları.

and in the Turkish community. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, many Kurds were banished to the Turkish regions by the Turkish state. In these regions, they experienced everyday racism. 'Kurds with tails' as a racist slur, a tool for the dehumanization of Kurds, was very prevalent among Turks in the early 20th century. The Kurdish exiles of the 1920s and the 1930s repeatedly mentioned it in their memoirs and interviews. These exiles reported that Turks called them 'Kurd with a tail' or they asked whether they had a tail or not.[18]

Kurds migrating to Turkish regions since the 1990s have been subjected to various other racist slurs, such as 'dirty Kurds', 'bigot Kurds', 'terrorists', 'Armenians', 'kıros', 'kekos', 'Go back to where you came from!', 'Don't speak Kurdish here!' and 'The best Kurd is a dead Kurd'. These anti-Kurdish and anti-Armenian racist slurs are profoundly related to the Armenian Genocide and the long-term Turkish colonial domination in northern Kurdistan. The racialization of Kurdish men has deeply impacted the Turkish language and culture, such that some racist slurs used against Kurds have become ordinary Turkish daily swear and insulting words used by Turks not only against Kurds but also against Turks. Today, the racist slur 'kıro', which is formed from the Kurdish word 'kuro', meaning 'son' in Kurdish and used to mean 'mate' as in British English or 'bro' in American English, has become a very prevalent Turkish insulting word to indicate someone who does not know how to behave properly or someone rude, mannerless and uncivilized. Moreover, the Kurdish word 'keko', meaning brother in Kurdish, has begun to be used by Turks to insult some men, especially Kurdish men.[19]

Among the racist slurs against Kurds, 'the best Kurd is a dead Kurd' is a very important racist invective found in Turkish culture. This remark openly dehumanizes Kurds and legitimizes the murder and the massacres of Kurds, the colonial state practices in northern Kurdistan, and the police violence against Kurds in the Turkish and Kurdish cities. As I mentioned above, Alevi Kurds in Dersim faced

[18] Diken, Ş. (2010) *İsyan Sürgünleri*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
[19] Yarkin, G. (2020) 'Fighting Racism in Turkey: Kurdish Homeownership as an Anti-Racist Practice', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43 (15), pp. 2705-2723.

genocide, and Sunni Kurds experienced many massacres and assimilation policies in northern Kurdistan. Despite the public denial policies and denialist discourses of the Turkish state, the prevalence of the invective of 'the best Kurd is a dead Kurd' among Turks reveals that Turks verbalizing or approving this invective are aware of the massacres and murders of Kurds by the Turkish state in northern Kurdistan, and they openly support the murder and massacre and genocide of Kurds.

Racist Mob Attacks Against Kurds

Perpetrators of racist mob attacks worldwide are predominantly from the dominant ethnic or racial groups that the states have constructed as privileged and superior. These dominant ethnic/racial groups perceive the demands of other ethnic groups to be equal to them as a threat to their existence, well-being, sovereignty, power and freedom. They fear losing their superior position in the regime and power over subaltern ethnic/racial groups. Massacres, genocides and racist mob attacks derive their legitimacy from the perceptions and feelings of threat, fear, anger and the dominant groups' desire to establish power over dominated ones. Dominant ethno-racialized groups do not want subaltern racialized groups to have equal access to economic, political and cultural resources. To keep their superior position in the system, they organize racist mob attacks and draw their strength from racist institutions, such as the police and the judiciary, that strengthen racial hierarchy and reproduce the racialized social regimes.

Many racist mob attacks occurred against different ethno-racialized groups in Turkey. Kurds, Syrians, Armenians, Alevis, Jews, Greeks, Roma people and others are the victims of these attacks. Each group has a different position and a historical trajectory within the Turkish supremacist racialized social regime. Therefore, the attackers' motivation and goals differ in all attacks. In the case of racist mob attacks against Kurds, the purpose of the assailants is generally to show Kurds who is the real sovereign in these lands, to remind Kurds that Turks set the rules in this region and that Kurds belong to the

lower position in Turkey. Thus, Kurds must know their limits and obey Turks and the rules of Turkish supremacy; otherwise, they would be punished, humiliated, or excluded. During these attacks, racists reproduce Turkish supremacy and Turkish sovereignty. Some racist attacks against Kurds aim to damage the victims' property, while in some attacks, they directly target bodies. Also, while some racist mob attacks occur 'suddenly' at the individual level, some attacks are carried out by crowds in a more organized and planned manner.

There were racist mob attacks against Kurds before the foundation of the PKK[20], yet these attacks increased significantly, especially after the start of the guerilla warfare of the PKK against the Turkish state. Starting from the 1990s, in parallel to the forced migration of Kurds to Turkish regions by the Turkish state, multiple community-level racist mob attacks against Kurds erupted in various places.[21] In fact, 2005 signifies a milestone in the history of Turkish-Kurdish relations and Turkish racism. In 2005, following the end of the five-year-long unilateral ceasefire (September 1999-June 2004) of the PKK, the anti-Kurd Turkish deep state forces attempted to create an everyday Turkish-Kurdish conflict in major cities of Turkey.

The everyday and institutional Turkish racism against Kurds has purposefully and openly been promoted by the Turkish state and the Turkish army through their policies and discourses by constructing Kurds as 'so-called citizens' or as those who do not respect and obey the Turkish flag, the Turkish state, and the Turkish nation. One crucial event after the end of the PKK's ceasefire in 2004 marks one of the historical moments in Turkish-Kurdish everyday relations. In 2005, on March 21st, during the Newroz celebrations in Mersin, a Turkish-dominated city in southern Turkey, a couple of Kurdish youth set fire to a Turkish flag, and this event led to the rise of anti-Kurdish sentiments among Turks. One day after this event, on March 22nd, the Office of the Chief of General Staff released a

[20] Diken, Ş. (2010) *İsyan Sürgünleri,* Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
[21] Kılıç, Ş. (1992) *Biz ve Onlar Türkiye'de Etnik Ayrımcılık*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

public statement that implicitly identified Kurds as not obeying the Turkish state and the Turkish flag and as the 'so-called citizens'.[22] Following this statement, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the deep state organizations and other statist racist Turks organized several demonstrations on behalf of the Turkish state and the Turkish flag. Nevertheless, evidence from the surveillance records made it clear that the flag burning in Mersin was orchestrated by Ali Kutlu, who was a member of the VKGB (Vatansever Kuvvetler Güçbirliği Derneği - the Association of the Union of Patriotic Forces), an organization related to Ergenekon, the Turkish nationalist and racist deep-state organization. Accordingly, the VKGB members told the local people in Mersin that Mersin was 'under the control of the PKK' and that this was a 'war of independence, and everyone with Turkish blood must participate in this war'. By using and circulating these claims and discourses among Turks, they organized mass demonstrations and 'Respect the Flag' protests, eventually mobilizing thousands of Turks around anti-Kurdish sentiments. For instance, one year after the Newroz provocation in Mersin in 2005, the deep state organization Ergenekon organized a 'Respect the Flag' demonstration in which almost 80,000 people participated.[23]

Hanging Turkish flags on windows or other places was not a very common practice of Turks before 2005. Nevertheless, following the flag provocation event in Mersin, hanging a Turkish flag on shop windows, home windows, and car windows has become a widespread phenomenon. Hanging the Turkish flag on windows or other places has become an important proof to show loyalty to the state and to become 'good easterner citizen' Kurds, who are constructed as 'usual suspects' by the Turkish state, are also expected to hang Turkish flags on their windows. In some cases, Kurds

[22] Turkish General Staff, March 22, 2005 'Genelkurmay'dan Bayrak Yakma Tepkisi', https://www.cnnturk.com/2005/turkiye/03/22/genelkurmaydan.bayrak.yakma.tepkisi/81831.0/index.html

[23] Çetin, M. (2009) 'Burn the flag + respect the flag = 'false flag' anyway'. Retrieved from: http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/muhammed-cetin/burn-theflag-respect-the-flag-false-flag-anyway_166741.h

hanged Turkish flags on their car windows, shops, and home windows to show their loyalty to the Turkish state and the Turkish nation. In some cases, Kurds hanged the Turkish flag on their windows to protect themselves from Turkish racism and Turkish colonial gaze.

In addition to the hanging of the Turkish flags with anti-Kurdish sentiments, starting from 2005, racist mob attacks targeting Kurds in Turkish regions significantly increased. According to Baki, between 1991 and 2011, 364 mob attacks occurred in Turkey. 50% of these mob attacks were carried out with political and racist motivations and aimed at Kurds or those assumed to be affiliated with Kurds. The rest of the mob attacks were carried out with 'general' motivations. Istanbul (23.6%), Izmir (5.5%) and Bursa (4.9%) are the first three cities where these mob attacks occurred. Other cities, respectively, are the following: Adana (4.1%), Ankara (3.8%), Muğla (3.6%), Antalya (3.3%), Sakarya (3%), Samsun (2.7%), Trabzon (2.5%), Balıkesir (2.2%), Mersin (2.2%). One of the important common characteristics of these cities is that they all have received massive Kurdish migration since the 1990s. The number of mob attacks suddenly increased in 2005. There were only six mob attacks in 2004, yet in 2005 this number reached 38 and 27 mob attacks were perpetrated by political motivations. Baki also states that between 1991-2005 only 40 out of 116 mob attacks were carried out with political motivations, yet since 2005, 140 out of 245 mob attacks have been carried out with political motivations.[24]

Kurdish seasonal agriculture workers, Kurdish students, unemployed Kurds, construction workers, shopkeepers, textile workers and others working in different sectors have all been subjected to racial violence to different degrees. Almost all Turkish cities or districts where Kurds reside have witnessed racist mob attacks against Kurds. Some attacks were very organized and large-scale and attracted thousands of Turks. Some Turkish cities, in which Kurds were

[24] Baki, B. (2013) 'Türkiye'de Linç: 1991-2013 dönemindeki linç eylemlerinin analizi', *Toplum ve Bilim,* 128, pp. 170-174.

subjected to direct physical racist violence including beating, arson or stabbing, were the following: İzmir-Kemalpaşa (*Bianet*, May 23, 2006), Balıkesir (*Birgün*, July 7, 2008), Hatay-Dörtyol (*Evrensel*, July 28, 2010), Bursa-İnegöl (Bianet, July 27, 2010), Samsun (Evrensel, April 22, 2014), Bayburt (Evrensel, August 8, 2016), Bolu-Mudurnu (Cumhuriyet, September 14, 2015), Trabzon (Birgün, February 21, 2011), Istanbul-Zeytinburnu (Milliyet, July 22, 2011), Uşak (Agos, April 29, 2016) etc. The reports of these newspapers reveal that the perpetrators show the following reasons for their attacks: the claims that Kurds speak Kurdish, deaths of Turkish soldiers and police officers due to the PKK attacks, soldier funerals, claims that Kurds swear, Kurds burn flags etc. most of these attackers were not punished by the Turkish judiciary.

After the end of the dialogue process between the PKK and the Turkish state in 2015, the Turkish army carried out many armed attacks against Kurdish civilians, numerous Kurdish civilians lost their lives, and their dead bodies were kept on the streets by the Turkish army. Since the summer of 2015, the violent Turkish colonial violence in northern Kurdistan has deepened exponentially. Parallel to the rise of the oppressive and authoritarian single-party government since 2016, racist rhetoric and attacks against Kurds continued in Turkish cities. Recently, many Kurds lost their lives in racist attacks. Most recently, a bloody massacre took place against the seven members of the Kurdish Dedeoğlu family in Konya in July 2021. Before committing the massacre, the attacker told one of the victims, ' We will not let Kurds live here'. After the massacre, the murderer attempted to burn the dead bodies. The trial of the perpetrators of this massacre continues.[25]

[25] 'ÖHD Konya'daki ırkçı saldırıya ilişkin raporunu açıkladı' (2 August 2021) http://www.mezopotamya ajansi35.com/tum-haberler/content/view/142761

Conclusion

In the 20th century, the geography we live in, which was named Turkey, was established not as a country of all ethnic groups but as a country of Turks and a country dominated by Turks, especially the Sunni Turks. A racialized regime based on Turkish supremacy has been built within the official borders of Turkey that also encompasses the territory of northern Kurdistan. According to the official ideology of the Turkish state, Turkishness is inclusive, and all other ethnic groups could benefit from all citizenship rights by assimilating themselves into Turkishness, giving up their own culture and history, and accepting Turkish sovereignty. The Turkish state has denied the existence of Kurds and has constituted a Turkish supremacist racist colonial regime in northern Kurdistan through armed violence and brutality. The Turkish army and the Turkish people constructed Kurds as 'feudal lord', 'savage', 'backward', 'bandit', 'brigand', 'ignorant', 'kıro', 'keko', 'the best Kurd is the dead Kurd', 'Kurds with tails' and 'mountain bears'. Against this colonial domination and racialized social regime, various Kurdish armed uprisings and massacres took place in northern Kurdistan. The Turkish state killed thousands of Kurds and displaced millions. The Turkish colonial domination and the racist regime led to the rise of everyday Turkish racism, Turkish racist slurs, and racist mob attacks against Kurds in Turkish cities. After these attacks, Kurds lost their lives, were injured, or lost their jobs. After the end of the dialogue process between the PKK and the Turkish state, racist slurs and attacks against Kurds have continued in Turkish cities. After these attacks, Kadir Sakçı (Sakarya, 2018), Şirin Tosun (Sakarya, 2019), Barış Çakan (2020), Hakim Dal (Konya, 2021), 7 members of Dedeoğlu family (Konya, 2021) lost their lives. Currently, the Turkish supremacist racist regime, racist slurs and racist attacks against Kurds persist to exist, and the Kurdish resistance against this racism continues despite the brutal violence.